

# Guidelines for Providing Public Comment to the Marine Life Protection Act South Coast Project

The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative is designed as a transparent, science-based and stakeholder-driven process. As such, public comment is important to the success of the marine protected area (MPA) planning process. There are different methods available for public comment (see below) and ways to make it most effective (see reverse).

## Oral Comments at Meetings

All meetings of the MLPA Initiative process will offer a minimum of one opportunity for public comment. Guidelines for general public comment at meetings include:

- Comment cards are requested to be submitted 15 minutes before the start of a general public comment period. No new comment cards will be accepted once the comment period has begun. Speakers must be present and turn in their own cards (this also applies to all individual speakers who wish to cede their time to other speakers).
- Comment cards will be counted and, at the discretion of staff or the chair, the time allocated to each speaker will be based on the total allocated time and number of speakers wishing to speak. Time allotments will be enforced.
- Speakers with a shared message or from the same organization are encouraged to combine speaking points. Additional time for comment will be given to these 'spokespeople' and those who have ceded their time can stand to show support.
- Speakers are welcome to distribute written material to the audience. Other media presentations, such as slides and videos, are only permitted by prior arrangement (contact Kelly Sayce at 310-738-2665 or [kelly@strategiccoceansolutions.com](mailto:kelly@strategiccoceansolutions.com)) and may be limited depending on time availability. Please arrive early and let staff know if you have a media presentation. An alternate space in the venue will be provided for displaying any additional media information, as needed and as space is available.
- The time for public comment will be noticed in the agenda for each meeting.
  - For the upcoming MLPA South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group meeting:
    - **On September 10, 2009 public comment will be taken for approximately 120 minutes beginning at approximately 9:00 a.m.**
- An atmosphere of respect and consideration among the public is essential for a productive comment period. Verbal threats, hostile comments, clapping, jeering and the like will not be tolerated and will lead to immediate dismissal.

## Written Comments

Written comments are accepted on an ongoing basis via email, fax or mail. All written comments are collated on a weekly basis and distributed to the south coast regional stakeholder group (SCRSG), blue ribbon task force, and staff, as well as the science advisory team if the comments are science related. In addition to formal public comments, members of the public can send comments directly to members of the SCRSG. Comments sent directly to SCRSG members are not distributed in the same manner as comments submitted to the MLPA Initiative. Comments to the MLPA Initiative can be submitted:

### Email

[MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov](mailto:MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov)

### Mail

Marine Life Protection Act Initiative  
c/o California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### FAX

916.653.8102

**Contact information for SCRSG members:** [http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/pdfs/agenda\\_111808a.pdf](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/pdfs/agenda_111808a.pdf)

## California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative Suggestions for Effective Public Comment

Public comment is one of the cornerstones of the California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative process and is greatly valued by the blue ribbon task force (BRTF), science advisory team (SAT), south coast regional stakeholder group (SCRSG), and MLPA Initiative staff. A short list of recommendations has been prepared to help maximize the effectiveness of the public comment in the MLPA Initiative process:

1. Comments are best directed to items under the purview of the MLPA (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/intro.asp#q1>).
2. Comments are most effective if directed to the MLPA Initiative group and are focused on items that are under consideration by that group.
  - a. Policy comments and overarching planning issues for the BRTF.
  - b. Science comments for the SAT.
  - c. Comments on marine protected area (MPA) design and placement for the SCRSG.
3. When preparing comments, it is very helpful to consider the key points you wish the BRTF, SAT or SCRSG to bear in mind as they do their work or make decisions.
4. Speakers should identify themselves, their main interest or connection to the ocean (if desired) and succinctly summarize their main message. Preparing a written statement for reference will help keep comments focused and succinct.
5. The length of time allocated to each speaker is up to the discretion of the meeting convener and typically depends on the number of individuals wishing to speak on a particular issue. Be prepared to have from 30 seconds up to 3 minutes to comment.
6. Multiple speakers with a shared message or from the same organization are encouraged and will be requested to combine their speaking points.
7. Meeting agendas will indicate when public comment is expected (i.e., general public comment will only be taken on one day of those SCRSG meetings that are coupled with a work session).
8. Speakers are welcome to distribute written material to the audience. Other media presentations, such as slides and videos, are only permitted by prior arrangement and may be limited depending on time availability (see reverse). Please arrive early and let staff know if you have a media presentation. An alternate space in the venue will be provided for displaying any additional media information, as needed and as space is available.
9. Questions raised during public comment cannot period generally will not be answered immediately. Therefore, if a response is desired, please submit questions in writing via email or standard mail to:

Email: [MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov](mailto:MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov)

Mailing address: MLPA Initiative  
c/o California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814